Tape No. 34-44-2-00 and 34-45-2-00

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW with

Phyllis McEldowney (PM)

Hawai'i Kai, O'ahu

July 6, 2000

BY: Holly Yamada (HY)

HY: Okay, this is the second session with Phyllis McEldowney. It's July 6, 2000.

All right, last time we left off you're still at UH. Actually maybe before we jump back into that—I don't think I asked you about your moving around in the Pi'ikoi area. Why was that that you folks moved around there?

PM: We went to a bigger house, and then we went to a more affordable house when the depression hit Hawai'i.

HY: Oh, I see.

PM: Then when things were looking up a bit, we moved to another place that was affordable. And then suddenly those people knocked on the door one day and said, "This house is up for sale. You'll have to move at the end of the month." Which was a big surprise to us. But we did and it worked out, and we were on Makiki Street.

HY: So you always rented?

PM: Yes, yes. We didn't own (except for Makiki Street).

HY: So it was an economical decision.

PM: Oh yes.

HY: Yeah, okay. Okay. Okay maybe we can continue with UH.

PM: Certainly.

HY: You were a language, literature and arts major. Now that's a major that doesn't exist as such anymore.

PM: It didn't really say anything. We didn't have to do those three things. I didn't touch the art part at all.

HY: You had said earlier that you just didn't feel like you had the ability in that area.

PM: Yes, and my interest was more in English really.

HY: So even though it's called that you did not have to take courses in art?

PM: That's right. That's correct. No adviser ever told me I had to.

HY: While we're talking about art, you had—the first time I met you, you had—(chuckles) you had some feelings about the artwork in the art building.

(Laughter)

PM: I didn't appreciate the nudes on the walls. So it was really kind of in fun though. Somebody else and I turned them facing the wall rather than facing all the people coming up the stairs.

HY: This is in—was it when it was in Hawai'i Hall?

PM: Hawai'i Hall.

HY: So you turned the pictures. Was it student pictures or just the artwork that they had in there?

PM: (They were) the students' work.

HY: So you turned them . . .

PM: To the walls so they wouldn't be offensive.

(Laughter)

HY: No one ever found out?

PM: I never heard a thing about it, no repercussions at all as far as I know. Nobody had any idea who did it. We got away with our crime.

HY: Around that time, when you were maybe a sophomore, they had built the Varney Circle fountain. Is that right? [Varney Circle was built in 1934.]

PM: No it was before that. It was already there.

HY: Oh, it was before that. Oh, it was already there. Okay. I had heard other stories about fountain pranks. I'll arm twist you into confessing.

PM: I think I went wading once. That's the extent of it. Not by myself.

HY: Was that a place where students gathered around, the Varney Circle fountain?

PM: Not really, not really. It was just sort of there. Interesting after hours, nobody else was around the campus when I was working in the Theater Guild and you had time in between.

HY: I think—it reminds me, too—I think I misspoke last time, and of course Farrington Hall is not there.

PM: I had heard that.

HY: Yeah, it's not there.

PM: But I wasn't about to know enough about it to correct you.

HY: In the [19]70s actually, and I was thinking about this big lecture hall in Webster. I was confusing it with that.

PM: I didn't really—along the way—I didn't see why they had to get rid of it. But I was out of there many years before they did. Couldn't they have used it for something?

HY: I don't know. Apparently it fell into some kind of disrepair and they just didn't. . .

PM: Didn't take care of it.

HY: Now you had mentioned the Kaulukukuis.

PM: Felice Wong.

HY: Yeah. And her future husband—her current husband—sort of a big guy on campus.

PM: Very. He was important and very much liked. He was very popular.

HY: Did you attend football games? Did you go to games?

PM: Yes. My sorority sometimes did the ushering, or selling the programs that kind of thing.

HY: Maybe you can just describe what that was like. You were at the old stadium, right?

PM: Yes, in Mō'ili'ili. [My] sorority went as a group and we had special sweatshirts so we'd all look alike. It was very important, you know. (Chuckles) I disliked doing that. I didn't like that.

HY: Now why was that?

PM: I was fundamentally shy.

HY: Oh, I see. So you had to escort people to—or you just took tickets?

PM: No, we didn't even take tickets. We were just selling the programs. But not always. Other people did it at other times, which was fine with me.

HY: Now did it seem that most of the student body turned out for these things, for the games?

PM: I think there was a pretty good turnout for the games. I think so. I enjoyed them. I enjoyed the games.

HY: Let's see. Maybe we can talk about some of your other activities. Oh, you were in Hui Po'okela. Now my understanding is that's a type of academic honor society.

PM: Honor society. You had to have a certain grade point [average] before you could be in there.

HY: How did that come about then. Where you invited?

PM: Yes.

HY: When you met, did you—what were the activities or what did you meet about?

PM: I have no idea.

(Laughter)

PM: I really don't. I don't know how often it was, if we paid dues. I just don't know. But I do know that later on, long after I was away, Mortar Board, which is a nationwide honor society, took the place of Hui Po'okela. And I could not be initiated into that because I was on an outside island. I was in Hilo. [You] had to be in Honolulu for the initiation. I don't quite know why there had to be such a mandatory thing, but it was. So I said, "Well, I can not be there."

But, they said, "Anytime you wish to be initiated you're still eligible." So I suppose I could find out if they still exist and take care of it. It isn't that important to me now. It was a nice honor to have at the time.

HY: Yeah, it was prestigious.

PM: To be eligible. Now it doesn't matter at this stage.

HY: What about Hui Kumu?

PM: That was an organization that had representatives from each of the sororities. It was like a—not exactly a headquarters for all of the sororities, but it was so representatives could get together and discuss plans that they had or find out how the other sororities felt about things.

HY: It was sort of like a board or something?

PM: Yes.

HY: I see. So you had agreements with other sororities about how you do group things?

PM: I really don't know what we did at the meetings. I have no idea.

HY: But you did have meetings.

PM: Yes. Not very often though. It was a rotating thing. One sorority would have (presidency) one year and that it would go on to another sorority.

HY: We talked about, I think the first time I met you, [how] a lot of the sororities are grouped by ethnicity.

PM: Yes they were.

HY: But you folks did do things—or at least some decision-making [things]—together?

PM: Yes, and that was what this Hui Kumu was. But we didn't look upon it as a big issue. Or rather we didn't make an issue of it, but I probably would not like it today.

HY: It was just . . .

PM: Just the way it was in those days.

HY: Yeah. [Another] of your activities was, I guess, student government. At least with the A.W.S.

PM: Associated Women Students.

HY: Yeah.

PM: Didn't do anything.

(Laughter)

PM: Gave a speech at the beginning of each year for the incoming students, who met in Farrington Hall at that time, and stood in front of this big group of *wahine*s and told them about Associated Women Students. I guess we met some other times. I know we did, but I have no idea what we discussed.

HY: But you organized initially—or one of the main functions was to sort of greet and introduce the new students?

PM: Yes, and any problems that might have come up that *wahine*s were involved in.

HY: Did you function as advisers to the younger students or as mentors?

PM: Not in any big way, but I think we were supposed to make ourselves available if anybody had questions.

HY: Maybe we can talk a little bit more about your academic life there again. I know we talked about some of the professors you had. You'd mentioned Sakamaki. Did you have him?

PM: I didn't have him.

HY: Oh, okay.

PM: But I knew him through my work in the secretarial office later.

HY: Yeah, okay. I think you did say that. And Waterman I think you mentioned.

PM: Ruth Waterman was physical ed[ucation].

HY: Did you have her?

PM: I did, for one semester when they made me take physical ed. I wanted to have the full four years of rifle. They looked me in the eye and said, "You have to have one year of real physical ed."

HY: Oh, they didn't consider the rifle team as a "real" physical ed?

PM: I guess not, not to meet the requirement that one semester had to be phys ed.

HY: What did phys ed involve?

PM: At my time it was volleyball, but it differed at different times of the year. Whatever was in season—baseball or volleyball or I don't know. I wasn't around for the others. It was volleyball for me, and that worked out well because I liked volleyball.

HY: Are there other professors that sort of stand out in your mind that had—I know, of course, Sinclair and Bachman were influential on you because you later worked for them.

PM: I had [Merton] Cameron. He was the one who used to rock back and forth on his toes.

HY: Oh, is that the economics [teacher]?

PM: Yeah. (Chuckles) He would start talking and reach a crescendo, and then he would come down again. Then he would be rocking his feet and going up again. He was a nice person, but it was sort of funny to get used to. There was a Dr. [Donald Winslow] Rowland. He was in history. I can visualize him but I don't know any more about him. He used to give the big lectures. He was nice.

HY: Who was your main English teacher, since that was kind of your big academic interest?

PM: Laura Schwartz. I had her for freshman English, and then later on for a specialized thing. She gave up on the whole class once. She gave us an assignment to write a book review, which we all did. She came to the next class and said, "None of you did what I wanted you to do." She was quite irate. I think maybe she didn't make it clear to us what she wanted. (Chuckles) But as far she was concerned it was our fault, all of us—twenty in the class. I can look at it and laugh now.

HY: So what was the upshot of that?

PM: We had to do it again when we understood more about how she wanted it done.

HY: Was that maybe an unusual display of temper? I'm trying to think about if there's a way to characterize teaching styles.

PM: I had never been in any class that had treated the students that way. I think we all felt that was her fault, which isn't really nice of us. But it was quite obvious that she didn't make it clear what she wanted. She maybe expected us to have learned before we got to her because it was one of the advanced English classes.

HY I know you had said earlier that academically you were pretty comfortable. Did you feel challenged?

PM: Yes, sometimes. It was scary. What's going to happen?

HY: Well, that sounded a little scary.

PM: Yeah.

HY: Well is there anything else that we kind of didn't—that stands out in your mind about those years, either academically or socially or your sports? I know you talked a lot about the rifle team.

PM: I don't know really. I spent a lot of time on weekends with the (pause) with the Theater Guild stuff, play productions.

HY: Well, maybe we didn't talk about that too much. I know you did stagecraft, right?

PM: What ever needed doing backstage.

HY: Yeah, and this was something that entailed working weekends.

PM: Yes.

HY: A lot of time. I think you mentioned that you actually got credit for that.

PM: Surprisingly, at the end of my senior year I had four extra credits that I had not expected to get. It was kind of nice.

HY: There's your art credit.

PM: Okay.

(Laughter)

PM: If you want it to be that way, that's fine. I did enjoy that.

HY: Was it kind of a social scene?

PM: Well, it became that. But nobody was told you can't join our group. It was wide open to anybody who was interested. Some people would appear for just some special production that they were interested in, but not just the routine, regular, all-year stuff.

HY: Now, I know like Kennedy Theatre was built for [accommodating] Japanese theater. I mean they build it so they could do Kabuki and—I forget what that thing is called, that runway. Hanamichi, I think. It's structured differently than a lot of theaters.

PM: I've never been in it.

HY: Oh, yeah.

PM: I don't know Kennedy [Theatre].

HY: I was wondering if they—because I know they did a lot of different types of theater at Farrington Hall, if . . .

PM: Well, that . . .

HY: Oh, we've got your annual right here.

PM: George [PM's husband] can look it up.

HY: Okay.

PM: We did Japanese and Chinese [theater].

HY: Yeah, there were a lot of different types of theater.

PM: Mm hmm, and Hawaiian. Of course there were different things each year, too.

HY: Oh, here you are [pictured in the annual].

(PM and HY discuss and try to identify various pictures in the annual.)

HY: Well, anyway we were talking about Farrington Hall. Even though you did all these different types of theater, the stage was basically constructed the same I assume.

PM: Yes, but they would—they had all sorts of things that could go on the stage to fit with the play. I remember working on a whole wall that they put in. It didn't go all the way up, but it was at least six or seven feet tall that was moved into the stage. So we had a whole different look to the play that was going on. It fit in with the play.

HY: So you would do minor adaptations to suit [the particular play].

PM: Some of them were fairly major. The stage looked entirely different for a specific play.

HY: Do you recall if there was any kind of runway that went out from the part of the stage that they use with traditional [Kabuki]?

PM: I don't think so. I'm trying to visualize how people got up onto the stage, whether we all had to come in the back door or—oh, there had to be steps on each side.

HY: Okay. So you graduated in 1937?

PM: Yes.

HY: Do you want to add anything before we leave your UH days?

PM: I didn't leave UH days (chuckles).

HY: Your UH student days.

PM: Yes, that's correct. No I don't think there was anything. No.

HY: So you graduated in '37, and then what did you do from there?

PM: Then I studied shorthand; then I went to work at the university.

HY: Did you study on your own?

PM: No. There was a woman in Waikīkī, who was a coach—sort of.

HY: Do you remember her name?

PM: Helen (Morgan).

HY: But she was somebody who was . . .

PM: Was recommended by somebody else, I don't know. Quite a few people did that who didn't want to go off to Cannon's [School of] Business, didn't want to have that whole course that they offered there. So I just went for shorthand.

HY: When you graduated, were you thinking you wanted to use your major in some way? What was your thinking about the education you had just gotten?

PM: I had no idea what language, literature and art was going to lead me to, if anything.

HY: You just sort of followed your interest.

PM: Yeah, I was just sort of not thinking too far ahead I'm afraid, but it worked out well. It worked out very well.

HY: So you went to—you took shorthand lessons. So your thinking at that time was to . . .

PM: I had to earn a living.

HY: Enter the work force.

PM: Yes.

HY: And are you living at home at this time?

PM: Yes.

HY: Where are you at this point with your folks?

PM: On Pi'ikoi Street.

HY: On Pi'ikoi.

PM: The last house on Pi'ikoi.

HY: Okay. How is it that you got hired at UH? How did that happen?

PM: Dean Bilger, Leonora Bilger, knew I was available and so she put in a few good words. Then I went for an interview by the [UH] president's secretary, who was an older person.

HY: Now was this [David] Crawford—president at that time?

PM: It was Crawford.

HY: How was it that Leonora Bilger knew you? Did you take classes from her?

PM: No.

HY: What was your relationship with her?

PM: She was dean of women, and I knew her through that. I did not take any classes from her.

HY: What was your prior interaction with her? Had she counseled you?

PM: Well, Associated Women Students, she was kind of involved in that. That was about it I guess.

HY: So she had actually recommended you for this position?

PM: Yes.

HY: And what was your title?

PM: Secretary. You mean when I had the job?

HY: Yeah. It was called secretary?

PM: Yeah. It was just a general thing in the office, and then in a short time each one was assigned to a main professor. "Main" probably is not the right word— [assigned] to someone who had prior rights to your time. I did work for other people too besides Dr. Bachman, but his stuff came first.

HY: Do you remember anything about the interviewing process when you went there?

PM: Besides being scared?

(Laughter)

PM: I don't think it amounted to very much. I would say very little because Mrs. Bilger's recommendation to the president's secretary was enough.

HY: Do you remember who the president's secretary was?

PM: Leonora Hoffman.

HY: Was she then considered your [boss]?

PM: Over boss, or whatever. She ran the secretarial office.

HY: So she was the manager of all the other secretaries.

PM: Yes. We could hear her heels clicking down the hall on the way to where we were, and we all became very busy before that door opened.

(Laughter)

PM: It was a good place to work.

HY: Where physically were you located?

PM: The corner of—it was Hawai'i Hall, and it was in the corner. . . . As you went into Hawai'i Hall, the front entrance—it had the two entrances, back and front—but from the front, make a left turn, go as far as you can, and open the door on the left. And that was it.

HY: Was that where Bachman's office was?

PM: His office was just the second door from our door. Dean George was the first door. Bachman was the next one.

HY: Now you had mentioned earlier that you kind of got to know Dean George a little better.

PM: Yes. He would pop into our office and ask questions or need some work done, or whatever. It's a little different knowing them [professors] like that than from just as a lecturer in front of a big class. They suddenly became human.

HY: It didn't seem so much so when you were a student?

PM: That's right. You didn't have the back and forth [rapport].

HY: I'm just trying to get grounded in time. Is this 1938 then when you got hired or is there a whole year that went by after you graduated?

PM: It was sort of on the borderline between December and January.

HY: Oh, okay. So the end of '37, beginning of '38.

PM: Yes.

HY: So obviously you expressed a couple of times that you enjoyed working there.

PM: Oh, I did. I really did.

HY: Maybe you can characterize the working environment.

PM: There was something I didn't like. And that was, those of us in the secretarial office were expected to—and we did—relieve the telephone operator for her lunch hour. Had to go down the hall to the main switchboard, and I thoroughly disliked it. I was scared of it. I had to sit there and push plugs in and make sure I had them in the right place, and didn't take them out before people were *pau* talking. I didn't like it. I didn't see why the telephone operator couldn't take her lunch hour at a normal lunch hour. No, she took it from 1:00 to 2:00, and that was when the switchboard was busy. We all thought how nice it would be if it were not so busy at lunchtime.

HY: Now this is a switchboard for all of the campus, the whole campus?

PM: The whole campus.

HY: These are, obviously, the switchboards where you actually—it's a board where you plug in.

PM: Yes, yes. And you plug it into President Crawford's space and hope you got the right one.

(Laughter)

PM: I remember once I didn't.

HY: It happens. Well, it happens now too.

PM: Well, I like to think that other people make mistakes (chuckles).

HY: So that was one of your duties.

PM: Yeah, but I don't know how often it was. It was once a— I don't think it was really once a week but it was too often for me.

HY: Was the secretarial pool all women or were there any men that were there?

PM: We had the eighteen-year-old boys. They handled the mimeographing, and the mimeograph office was down in the basement.

HY: Were they students or were they recent graduates?

PM: No, they were recent graduates of high school.

HY: So they weren't college students.

PM: No, no. But there was one who did the regular secretarial stuff too, and he didn't do the mimeographing. He eventually became a teacher. I remember seeing his name in the roster for Washington Intermediate [School]or someplace.

HY: Do you remember his name?

PM: Isaac… There's a little story there. His name was Issao, and some teacher somewhere along the line when he was in elementary school decided that was too hard [to pronounce and said,] "Your name is Isaac." So he became Isaac Watanabe. I think it was Watanabe. He was a nice kid.

HY: So the mimeograph room was below.

PM: It was below.

HY: And it was all these young guys that worked there.

PM: But they were also, part of the time, in our secretarial office for other things that they needed to do, and for the professors to come in and give them the work to be done, exams to be mimeographed and that sort of thing.

HY: This is that aromatic purple-ink stuff, right?

PM: (Laughs) Yes. I don't remember a special smell to it but it was definitely purple.

HY: Oh, well maybe I'm thinking of something else then.

PM: Maybe they've changed it. I don't know. I don't recall any smell.

HY: How big an office is this, where you folks are? How many people are in there, generally?

PM: I'm counting desks. Five secretaries—we better count Isaac as a secretary too—six secretaries and then two mimeograph people. So quite a few people.

HY: So I was asking you to characterize the environment there—you generally liked it except for some of the duties like the switchboard you didn't care for.

PM: Yes. Generally the people were compatible except there was one older woman who irritated everybody, and it's embarrassing to think that you let it irritate you. But she was a flibbertigibbet, I would say. If you know what a flibbertigibbet is.

HY: I remember that word from Mary Poppins.

(Laughter)

HY: Or no, wait—some movie.

PM: Long ago.

HY: Some Julie Andrews movie.

PM: She would get up and change the shades or she would close the window, never asking if it's all right with everybody else. We wanted to accommodate her. We wanted her to be comfortable, but her attitude was long past the time she should've left.

HY: What about your relationship with the professors? What kind of dynamic was that now [that you're] somebody who worked in the support staff of the university?

PM: Do you mean were they surprised to see me in the secretarial office after they've had me as a student?

HY: Well maybe that too, but also just to characterize what the relationship was like.

PM: Most of them were very nice, and we were interested in what they were doing and what it was we were doing for them—letters or whatever. They were really a nice bunch of people. They treated us well. It was a good place to work.

HY: What about that administration? Now, you must have straddled a couple of administrations while you were there, I guess.

PM: Yes, there was Crawford's and then we went to Sinclair. I'm trying to think if there was anybody in between. Oh, Dean [Arthur] Keller took over [as acting president, 1941-42].

HY: Just briefly. That's right.

PM: Yes.

HY: I don't know from that vantage point as support staff, the secretarial pool, whether you are able to characterize or notice the difference in the administrations as it affects your work.

PM: They were such different people. President Crawford was so different from President Sinclair.

HY: In what way?

PM: That's hard. I never thought of President Crawford as being involved in a specific course of study. I don't know if President Crawford ever was a professor there. [Crawford originally came to Hawai'i as an entomology professor in 1917.] But of course Sinclair went from being one of the teachers and then to the president's office. And I saw him both ways because I had had him.

HY: What about just administrative styles?

PM: They had to be different.

HY: Like hands on [or] . . . . those type of characteristics.

PM: It was easier to know President Sinclair, but perhaps that was because I had had him as a student so maybe my logic doesn't make too much sense there. I don't know.

HY: You had kind of an interesting story about Bachman, who you—essentially you worked primarily for him.

PM: Yes.

HY: You were telling me that right before the war started. . .

PM: Oh, yeah. That was (pause).

HY: Get chicken skin.

PM: Really do, I really do. It was a traumatic time at the university because we had that whole group of young, Japanese boys who formed their own—called the Varsity Victory Volunteers, VVV. They volunteered and they did such a good job as it evolved. Eventually, of course, they went to Europe. But Dr. Bachman did a lot of lecturing, organizations, business groups and such. He was lecturing at the Pacific Club, I think it was. I had typed his speech. I didn't make up the speech, I just typed it. It was about the United States getting into the war, which was in progress then in Europe. Let's see—getting into the war with Japan. I think there was something else in between there. Anyhow, there was very little agitation anywhere that now we're going to get into the war with Japan. Nothing that I recall about that. And suddenly he came up with his speech that the Pacific Club, on December 6, [1941]—that famous year. He delivered the lecture, and war started the next day. But he did not cause it. (Chuckles) He was into it enough to know it was going to happen. There was not a lot of general talk about it inevitably happening.

HY: What did you think [while] you were typing up this [speech]?

PM: I thought it was interesting. I wasn't scared. Then I walked into his office on December 8. All I said was, "You were right." He was good to work with.

HY: Can you characterize his administrative style? I guess you—you weren't with him [when he was] president.

PM: That's right.

HY: But as someone to work for.

PM: I enjoyed working for him.

HY: Did he interact a lot with his support staff? I guess it was you. You were his support staff.

PM: I don't know how much interacting—I was surprised when I went away on a trip, and on the last night the ship people came up with a corsage that he had sent to be delivered on the last night of the trip. It was very nice.

HY: So he was thoughtful.

PM: He was a nice person.

HY: I think we're on the end of this side now.

PM: Okay.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

HY: Yeah, you [refers to George McEldowney, PM's husband]can interject if you want to.

(Laughter)

HY: Okay, we're talking about Bachman and his speech at the Pacific Club.

PM: Yeah.

HY: So he must have—that must have been received . . .

PM: I imagine quite a few people were surprised on Sunday, after they had heard him give his lecture.

HY: Let's talk about the war then, how it affected your work and the campus. What happened then? Okay, you come into work on December 8.

PM: Of course there was nothing else to talk about except the fact that we were at war, and it was Japan that had sunk ships in Pearl Harbor and how dare they (chuckles). It was especially hard on the Japanese people. You just felt so sorry for those you had gone to school with and knew pretty well. They were taking it as if everyone was going to look down on them, which probably some people did. But I think most people who lived in Hawai'i for any length of time were just feeling so sorry for them. They felt the burden. It shouldn't have been.

HY: School was suspended.

PM: Yes it was. Of course it was in December so they closed out the semester.

HY: What kind of work were you doing then? I don't know—I assume that would change the nature of your work.

PM: I don't know. I really don't know. I don't remember I should say.

HY: Did you keep the same schedule? Did you keep your regular work schedule that you had prior to the war?

PM: Yes, yes.

HY: So you continued to come into the office.

PM: There was one of the professors who almost immediately started writing a book, which he entitled *Remember Pearl Harbor*. That was Blake Clark, and he asked me if I would type it—not on work time, not on the university time. I said I would, so I typed on the weekends. He wanted to pay me, but I didn't want to get paid. I felt that's the least I can do. A lot of people were volunteers in all kinds of things. I wasn't doing that so I figured that I could give my time to the book. And I shared with Edean Ross. She did some of it and I did some of it. It took a while.

HY: Did you have any Japanese workers in your secretarial pool?

PM: Isaac. Isaac was there.

HY: Do you know what happened to him then?

PM: He became a schoolteacher.

HY: No, I mean during the war. Did he continue working there?

PM: Yes he did. He was a little older than—quite a bit older, I guess, than the eighteen and nineteen year olds who signed up to join the 100th [Infantry Battalion]or 442nd [Regimental Combat Team].

HY: Do you remember where you were December 7? You were at home.

PM: Yes, yes we were at home. My cousin and her family had come in on the *Lurline* that arrived on a Wednesday. The whole family, which consisted of three children at that time, came to our house, my parents house, for breakfast, a late breakfast. They went to church first, and they were staying in Waikīki but they had gone off to church. They

came by for—I guess it was a brunch they came by for. Maybe it was lunch, whatever—a meal of some sort. And they didn't know we were at war. They arrived at our house, and they didn't know we were at war.

HY: They were on vacation.

PM: Uh huh, and they were staying in Waikīkī. So they stayed with us for about two weeks. It was a crowded house, but we were all very thankful we were alive.

HY: I assume they had to stay because they couldn't get out. Right?

PM: I'm mistaken in saying it was a vacation. It was a transfer from American Factors headquarters in San Francisco to Hawai'i. So he was going to have a new job in Hawai'i.

HY: Oh, so they were planning on staying here anyway.

PM: Yes.

HY: Oh, I see.

PM: Actually, it was good to have them with us, busy as we were with all the meals and all the people because it was occupying time, [otherwise we] had more (time to) worry. But we were busy with all the people, having to carry on. This cousin was the daughter of my mother's favorite sister. So it was nice for her to have Camilla with us.

HY: How did it change daily life?

PM: A lot of things immediately were not available food-wise. But then it simmered down to: We have to keep on feeding Hawai'i. So actually we in Hawai'i were better fed than a lot of people on the Mainland. They had to keep those ships going for us. People were kind of surprised, "Oh, you have—" whatever, "we don't have."

HY: What were some of the things that you missed immediately in the beginning [in terms of] food shortages? Do you remember?

PM: Potatoes. My neighbors, who were Japanese—our neighbors, who were Japanese—offered to go to May's Market because they had a special—not a pass—but they were special customers, so they could get potatoes, which they weren't terribly interested in getting because they were rice people. So they were very nice. They got us some potatoes once in a while, which was good. But butter was a shortage, definitely. We had some kind of funny stuff put together that you put on your toast but it didn't taste like butter (chuckles).

HY: Oh, it was some butter substitute?

PM: Yes.

HY: Was that something the dairies made or was that just a home concoction?

PM: No, it was not a home concoction. Except if you wanted it colored you could put the little packet of yellow dye, stir it all up and it looked like butter.

HY: This is like the early margarines. So that was available?

PM: Yes.

HY: But real butter wasn't?

PM: Yeah, however those of us who had access to the PX, post exchange, were able to get things that the army could get because they had to feed the army people. Since George shortly was in the army, though he didn't belong to the family quite then.

HY: You folks were married in '42, so still during [the war]. What about blackouts?

PM: Immediately. My father was on the neighborhood watch. [He'd] go out and see who had their lights showing, that sort of thing. The very first night it was blackout. Of course we weren't prepared for it. Some people had curtains that would help, but most of us didn't have anything that was going to shut out the light very much. But people improvised very well till we could all get denim to make—you didn't really make curtains, but you put up pieces of denim. It was very effective. It cut out all the light.

HY: Denim was the fabric of choice?

PM: Yeah. It was sturdy.

HY: What about at UH, were there any kind of special instructions—maybe gas masks?

PM: Gas masks, we all had to have gas masks. They dug bomb shelters right there outside of Hawai'i Hall, on various parts of the campus. Fortunately we didn't have to use them.

HY: Did you ever have drills or anything like that?

PM: Yes. They had drills. We were supposed to go to a certain place, probably right near the bomb shelter. I don't really recall doing that but it had to be.

HY: Were you issued a gas mask?

PM: Yes. We had to go pick it up wherever they were dispensing them—in Makiki. It was at the Scottish Rite Cathedral. They call it Scottish Rite Cathedral.

HY: Was that cathedral used for other wartime activities?

PM: I don't know. Do you know (speaking to GM)?

GM: Yeah, it was used as an aid station and center of civil defense.

HY: And that's where you folks picked up your gas masks.

PM: Yeah, and you had to carry them.

HY: Oh, you carried them. You carried them all the time?

PM: All the time. I'm sure not everybody did but you were supposed to, and those of us who obeyed orders did. After all it was in your own interest to do it.

HY: You mentioned, you were talking about food shortages. I know a lot of people had victory gardens. Did you folks do that?

PM: My father had a victory garden, yes.

HY: What did he grow?

PM: I don't remember what we ate from it, but he felt that he was doing his share by having his garden. It was kind of a tough time, but it was—when you look back on it, the thought that you were living history was pretty important.

HY: Did you have that sense of it at the time or is this in retrospect?

PM: I think we did, along with a sense of worry because that bombing was too real.

HY: Okay. So you mentioned earlier you folks got married in 1942. Where did you live then?

PM: We lived in an apartment in Mānoa, way up in Mānoa, until he [GM] went off to war.

HY: So your husband was in the army.

PM: Fortunately he had taken ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps] at the university so he was a lieutenant, which helps with the pay that lieutenants get as opposed to privates. Many of the mornings, as you [refers to GM] said, you were not anxious to get up and go to ROTC by 7:30 when you were at the university, but it paid off in the long run.

HY: Maybe I'll just change directions a little bit here and ask you about courtship, if this isn't too personal. (Chuckles) You met each other at UH but then you started seeing each other after that, you had mentioned. What was courtship like back then? I mean, what did people do?

PM: I don't think they called it courtship even.

HY: What did you call [it]? You tell me.

PM: I went out with George.

(Laughter)

HY: Okay now, what did that mean?

PM: It meant strictly nice girl. Strictly. We could call you nice, too—speaking to George here. It was for a long time, six years all together.

HY: What were things that you did?

PM: We went to the show sometimes, but there was not a lot of money. What did we do George? Oh we went to the beach, when beach was available.

HY: Did you go to dances?

PM: Some with the sorority and fraternity stuff, but we were not the best dancers in the world. We weren't even second best (chuckles).

HY: I'm interested too because part of this time it was during the war, and of course nighttime activities—you know, night dances and stuff like that didn't happen because of the blackout.

PM: People had private things, like they would ask a group of people to their home. At first everything had to be blacked out by eight o'clock [P.M.], but then later on you had a ten o'clock deadline. So people could carry on pretty much as usual [with] the ten o'clock deadline. You had to be off the street and you had to have blue lights—headlights—on your car. I don't know, there were restrictions. We survived.

HY: So you continued working at UH after you got married.

PM: Yup.

HY: At what point did you began working for Sinclair rather than Bachman?

PM: I worked for him for two years. I don't know. It's hard for me to say when I left the secretarial office for the president's office. It's hard to say. (Pause)

HY: That's okay. Do you remember how that came about that you moved from the secretarial pool?

PM: He didn't want the secretary who was there, who was his secretary. I'm talking about Sinclair now, and it was devastating to her to be let go. I felt very sorry for her—and not really a sense of guilt, but I wish it had not happened that way because she and I were friends. She was serving President Crawford. We would deal with her—the secretarial office would deal with her on lots of things, and I liked her. It was devastating to her to be let go.

After two years my mother had died, and I said that I only wanted to work half-day because I wanted to spend the time home and do the things that needed doing around my father's house. So I tendered my resignation to the person in charge and with the addition to my letter, if there's a place that I could fill for half a day, I would appreciate being considered. So whammo (chuckles) I was out of the president's office and into the registrar's office for half a day, and it worked out very well. I had said that I would work full day during registration because I knew that was our busy, busy time. The registrar wanted me so I worked there until I left because I was *hāpai.*

HY: This was in '46. Is that right?

PM: Yes—['4]5, '45.

HY: Forty-five. Then in 1946 you folks moved to Hilo.

Well, how was it different than working in the president's office as opposed to the secretarial pool?

PM: Well, it was quite different because I had all the phone calls that had to be taken when he was away.

HY: Would you say you were much busier?

PM: I think so. It was more responsibility.

HY: Would characterize it as kind of high pressure?

PM: At times. At times it was. He was nice to work for but it was pressure. He always treated me well.

HY: And you had said you weren't sure if it was because you knew him as a professor or maybe it's because you were working more closely with him, but he was more personable.

PM: Oh yeah, he was always nice to me. I had had just general sophomore English from him and then specialized on the Oriental studies, which of course was his main interest. He was really responsible for the East-West Center. I don't know that he was ever given enough credit for it, but he should have been.

HY: Well, his interest in that started real early on, and I would imagine that it was somewhat stifled during the war. Do you recall that?

PM: I think it was probably hard for him. I don't really know. It all worked out somehow.

HY: I'm interested in the—again, the relationship with the administrators and the support staff. Was there ever like a social relationship or was it strictly . . .

PM: Not really, not really. I know when Dr. Bachman became president of the university I wrote him a letter—of course I was in Hilo by that time—wishing him well and telling him that I had enjoyed working with him. So he wrote back, "Only you knew my feelings."

(Laughter)

PM: It was a nice, personal [note] saying I appreciated that.

They had a meeting in Hilo when Dr. Bachman became president, and it was open to any University alumni who wanted to go. It was a dinner meeting and I very much wanted to go and say hello to him personally. It was held at—was it Orchid Island (Hotel)?

GM: I don't know. I don't remember.

PM: You were there with me, but that's all right. (Chuckles) Anyhow, so I went and had quite a long chat with him. He didn't know most of the people who were there—the Hilo university people. He didn't know many of them. We had time to have a nice chat. He told me all about his family and he had a son called Stanton. I remember I made a mistake once on a letter. He had dictated it and I thought the boy' name was Stanley, so I typed it out as Stanley. He had to tell me it's Stanton.

HY: So you remember his name now.

PM: I remember it was Stanton. He was nice about it. The letter did not go out as Stanley.

HY: You were at Sinclair's office for a couple of years you said. And then what was it like at the registrar's office? How different was that?

PM: It was quite different because I went into the registrar' office—I was not in charge of that office as I had been in the president's office, that is in the outer office of the president's office. Sinclair was in charge.

(Laughter)

PM: It was fine. I enjoyed—we worked with credit ratios and all sorts of things, incoming students.

HY: Where was that office?

PM: Hawai'i Hall.

HY: Now was the president's office also there? They were all there.

PM: Yeah.

HY: Yeah, okay.

PM: The registrar's office was here. Then there was the exit, the back entrance or exit. Sinclair was way down the end of the corridor, way down. You could hear him jingling his keys in his pocket as he walked up and down the hall. (Laughs) You don't forget little things like that.

HY: Who was part of your staff that you had at his office? Do you remember?

PM: There was a Mildred Ota and (pause) What was her name? It was Mary Akana. She worked mostly for the vice president, but she was available for anything that needed to be done.

HY: Were they considered your staff?

PM: No, not really. We were all in the same office but Mildred was—I could tell Mildred what to do. Proofread stuff and correct it, that kind of thing.

HY: So it was the three of you or were there other people there?

PM: I think there were only three. I think so. Anybody else hiding back in the corner?

(Laughter)

HY: This is kind of a general question, and I don't know if you can answer it from your vantage point but did you notice [if] there were changes in the student body?

PM: Oh yes.

HY: I know of course it got much more populated, but just general question about the feel of the campus.

PM: Well, so many of the boys had gone off to war, and the *wahine*s had joined the (pause) Babe Young was with them (joined WARD), the *wahine*s that—what did they call themselves?

GM: Oh, WACs [Women's Army Corps and] Women's Air Raid Defense [WARD].

PM: There were at least two groups, and it took some of the students away. It took some of the staff away, too. So it was a whole different atmosphere on the campus. A lot of the—probably the kids right out of high school would go into something else rather than go to the university because there were jobs available. People went to work.

HY: Anything else about your UH days?

PM: Well, I enjoyed them. Are you talking about student [days] or working [days]?

HY: Oh, just in general—whatever, working and student [days].

PM: I felt very comfortable on campus, of course (chuckles) after . . .

HY: Longtime presence.

PM: Yeah. I'm astounded now at what it looks like, just astounded. I can't believe it.

HY: It's a little city.

PM: All these buildings and such different character they have. They have their own character in keeping with whatever their—not just what they are teaching but. . . . So many of the buildings up there now are named for these professors that I used to work for. The campus is not the same. (Chuckles) I feel as though there's no campus left, there's just buildings.

HY: Was there kind of a—I mean it's so big now, I'm guessing that the time you were there, even when you were working and as a student, it was a little more cohesive in terms of people knowing everybody.

PM: Had to be. It had to be like that.

I've only been on the campus maybe twice recently. Look what they did to it—they put all these buildings in here! It was a nice place to work.

HY: So in 1946 then, you folks moved to Hilo. Tell me why—oh, you did actually already on tape. You were pregnant and . . .

PM: Yeah.

HY: So maybe you can just tell me a little bit about what it was like adjusting to Hilo and then raising your family.

PM: Rain. Rain. More rain. Constant rain. Look out the window, see the rain coming up from the seashore. It was quite an adjustment because I had the baby, and when he was eighteen months old I had another one. I was constantly putting clothes on the clothesline, looking down *makai*, oh rain's almost here, go out and get the clothes off the clothesline. Day came that I contacted an appliance store. This man, who has remained a friend ever since, knew of a washing machine—or dryer, rather—a dryer at Honoka'a that he could get. Please get it. (Laughs) So the dryer arrived and my attitude toward Hilo changed radically. It could rain as much as it wanted. I didn't care. I didn't have to bother with it.

HY: The wonder of appliances, yeah?

PM: The scarcity of them at that time, too. Had to go to—why one ended up in Honoka'a, I don't know. Somebody had some foresight somewhere. So that put an end to those worries about getting clothes dry, and kids' clothes particularly. It was good. So then I began to like Hilo all right. Up until then, "Why did we come?" Well we came because George had a job, and that was important.

HY: And your husband began working in the construction industry.

PM: He was (pause) I was going to say you were—when did the National Guard come in there?

GM: What?

PM: When were you *pau* with the army and then you went to the National Guard?

GM: When did I start with the National Guard?

PM: Yeah.

GM: [Nineteen] forty-seven.

PM: There wasn't much of a gap then, really. Okay, so he could continue his interest in army stuff by being in the National Guard for many years. How many was it?

GM: Twenty-five, thirty [years].

PM: A long time.

HY: How was your adjustment culturally to being in a—you know, you're in this university campus in Honolulu and now you're in Hilo where it rains a lot. Just culturally how was it?

PM: There [were] a few people that I knew from Honolulu who were also in Hilo. I'm not terribly an outgoing person, so I was lucky to have people that I had already known, or known of, who also had children my kids' age. So that early part was fairly easy. They moved away. By that time I knew a few more people but not a great deal. Nobody's left there now. They came and went either by plane or by death. As we got older that happened more frequently.

HY: You spent the next fifty-one years—is that right?—in Hilo. Now you're in your current place here in Hawai'i Kai.

PM: This has not been an adjustment from Hilo at all. It's been easy because there was nobody there in the family, and there were two people here from the family. It seemed very logical to me.

HY: Well, maybe I'll just ask you . . .

PM: You can ask me anything you want, Holly.

HY: Okay, okay. (Chuckles) I will.

PM: I won't answer if I don't feel I need to.

HY: That's right. That's how it works. I'm just going to ask you a kind of a wrap up type question about the significance of your education at UH—what it meant to you and your family.

PM: I'm thankful for it. I'm thankful for it. My mother was very determined. She had had to stop high school before she was a senior. Her father died—no. Well, who died first? Anyhow, one of her parents. It was her mother who died, and she had to help with her father. He was spry but not to be alone. So she went to work before her senior year in high school. She always regretted having to do it, but she felt she had to. She was determined that her children were going to get the rest of the education that she didn't get. She would have loved to have been a teacher. So that didn't materialize.

HY: She must have been proud of you.

PM: I think she was. I felt very fortunate to have had her be so dedicated to education. And it was a tough time financially when the depression hit Hawai'i later then the Mainland. She would walk from Makiki [to] Downtown to do things that needed to be done because seven and a half cents for bus fare—car fare—was out of her budget. There was a guilt feeling on my part for going to school and she was making sacrifices. She wouldn't have been happy if I had not gone.

HY: Is this something that you feel you passed on this importance of education to your children?

PM: Absolutely, absolutely. They all knew it was expected of them. In fact one came home from school one day and she faced me squarely and said, "I didn't know you didn't have to go to college."

(Laughter)

PM: I said, "That's right Janis, but you do." It was one of those moments that you remember [about] your kids. They knew it was expected of them, and they all went and they all made it through. It goes back to my mother.

HY: Okay. Anything else?

PM: It's up to you. Quite a wide coverage here. It's up to you. If you think of anything in the next two minutes sing out.

HY: Okay. That's good for now then.

PM: Okay.

HY: Thank you so much.

PM: It's been fun for me, too.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

HY: Okay we've got a couple more minutes. Just life as a—in Hilo as a...

PM: As a refugee from the tsunami?

HY: Yeah, yeah.

PM: It was a good life. Especially, as I said earlier, when I got a clothes dryer and life sort of settled in.

HY: How did you folks prepare for a tsunami?

PM: We had to think about marketing, doing our shopping, because there was a 1960 tsunami. We weren't there in the. . . .

HY: There was one in—was it '46 right when you got there? Right after you got there?

PM: Just before we got there.

HY: You got there after it.

(Laughter)

HY: Was there sort of a constant awareness that there would be [another one]?

PM: No, I wasn't afraid it would happen again because where we were located it was up, *mauka*. I was very glad that we had not bought a house that was right on the ocean, and George had looked at and thought it might be a good place for us. I don't know why I declined to be there but fortunately I did because that place was gone later.

After a while we belonged to the yacht club, and that was a good place for our kids to go swimming. They had the pool there. We weren't really interested in any of the other activities at the yacht club. We could've been if we were tennis players, but we weren't. We weren't that socially inclined to have parties, but we were invited to some that we went to.

And looking at the devastation after tidal waves, tsunami's, was—you're in awe of what waves could do. The pictures you see that they always have is the parking meters [that are bent], a whole line of them. That was one big wave of thirty-five feet high, which is pretty tall when you think of it from here to the ceiling and you had to get way up to

thirty-five. Of course then you knew some of people who were gone, some of them you just knew of. I remember Fred Kruse.

END OF SIDE TWO

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HY: You were talking about Fred Kruse.

PM: He was an art major at the university, and I knew who he was there. He was teaching at Laupāhoehoe and he was drowned [in the] (1946 tsunami). When it's a person you have seen and seen off and on for many years it kind of hits you. One of the girls in one of my daughter's class (died—Constance Masutani—[in the] 1960 Tsunami). It really makes it real even though you're not down in it. It was a big time in Hilo. It was an important time.

HY: Okay.

PM: All right.

HY: Thank you again. Thank you so much.

END OF INTERVIEW